

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. In a computing device having at least one plug-in module that extends the functionality of a Web browser, a method of identifying a plug-in module that generated a failure, comprising:

in response to receiving notice of a failure, obtaining selected contents of memory of said computing device created at the time of the failure;

generating a failure signature that is characteristic of the plug-in module that generated the failure; and

comparing said failure signature with one or more failure signatures generated by known plug-in modules.

2. The method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising:

if the failure signature is characteristic of a known plug-in module, determining if the known plug-in module has an update that does not generate a failure.

3. The method as recited in Claim 2, further comprising:

if the known plug-in module has an update that does not generate failures, informing the user of the availability of the update.

4. The method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising allowing the user to disable the plug-in module that generated the failure.

5. The method as recited in Claim 1 wherein obtaining the contents in memory of said computing device at the time of the failure includes obtaining a minidump file.

6. The method as recited in Claim 1 wherein generating a failure signature from the contents of memory that is characteristic of the plug-in module that generated the failure includes:

identifying the library that was executing at the time of the failure;

determining the plug-in module that uses said library; and

identifying the application that interacts with the plug-in module that uses said library.

7. The method as recited in Claim 6 wherein identifying the library that was executing at the time of the failure includes searching a minidump file.

8. The method as recited in Claim 6 wherein determining the plug-in module that uses said library includes searching the system registry for associations between plug-in modules and libraries.

9. The method as recited in Claim 6 wherein identifying the application that interacts with the plug-in module includes searching the system registry for associations between applications and plug-in modules.

10. A computer-readable medium bearing computer-executable instructions that, when executed, carry out a method of identifying a plug-in module that generated a failure, comprising:

in response to receiving notice of a failure, obtaining selected contents of memory of said computing device created at the time of the failure;

generating a failure signature that is characteristic of the plug-in module that generated the failure; and

comparing said failure signature with one or more failure signatures generated by known plug-in modules.

11. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 10, further comprising:  
if the failure signature is characteristic of a browser plug-in module, determining if the known plug-in module has an update that does not generate a failure.

12. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 11, further comprising:  
if the known plug-in module has an update that does not generate failures, informing the user of the availability of the update.

13. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 10, further comprising allowing the user to disable the plug-in module that generated the failure.

14. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 10 wherein obtaining the contents in memory of said computing device at the time of the failure includes obtaining a minidump file.

15. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 10 wherein generating a failure signature from the contents of memory that is characteristic of the plug-in module that generated the failure includes:

identifying the segment of code that was executing at the time of the failure; and  
determining the library that contains said segment of code that was executing at the time of the failure; and

identifying the application that interacts with the plug-in module that uses said library.

16. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 15, further comprising determining if said segment of code that was executing at the time of the failure includes searching a minidump file.

17. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16 wherein determining if said segment of code is from a library used by a plug-in module to a Web browser includes searching the system registry for associations between plug-in modules and libraries.

18. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 15 wherein identifying the segment of code that was executing at the time of the failure includes searching the system registry for associations between applications and plug-in modules.

19. A computer-readable medium bearing computer-executable instructions which, when executed:

identifies plug-in modules used in conjunction with a Web browser;

displays a graphical user interface that lists the plug-in modules used in conjunction with a Web browser; and

supports disabling one or more of the plug-in modules used in conjunction with a Web browser.

20. The computer-readable medium recited in Claim 19 wherein identifying one or more plug-in modules used in conjunction with a Web browser includes searching the system registry for associations between plug-in modules and a Web browser.

21. The computer-readable medium recited in Claim 19 wherein the graphical user interface indicates whether each plug-in module used in conjunction with a Web browser may be updated.